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Alexander Hamilton Stephens
TO THE PEOPLE OF GEORGIA.

FELLOW-CITIZENS: I have just seen a paper, purporting to be addressed to you by "Mr. STILES," one of your Representatives in Congress, in reply to the note accompanying my speech in the House upon the constitutionality and validity of the second section of the last apportionment act. It was, doubtless, neither the wish or expectation of the author of this most singular communication that it should pass without notice, as, in that event, the merits of "his vindication" could not be so thoroughly understood or *duly appreciated*. And as he intimates an intention of "leaving me the sole master of that bloodless field, wherein a 'war of words' is" to be "the only conflict," I will not disappoint him so far as to permit him to retire from that field without a somewhat formal discharge.

He very much mistakes the object of my note, if he flatters himself with the belief that it was, in any way, intended as an "appeal to the public for satisfaction for any 'private griefs'" inflicted by him.

I should, indeed, think that I had sustained a "loss of position," if I imagined that my "honor," either in my own or your estimation, could ever be reached, much less "assailed," from any such source.

As I would *kick a cur growling in my way*, or *crush a viper hissing at my feet*, so I intended, and so I am persuaded you understood, the answer given to him in that note—"et *mecum sic semper balatro.*"

There is but one part of his address I shall notice, and that only for the purpose of illustrating the character of the whole.

• He says of himself, "I did occupy my hour upon the subject stated, and, in the course of my remarks, commented upon the inconsistencies of Mr. Stephens' opinions and conduct. If my allusion to him had been deemed offensive at the time it was uttered, he had the opportunity to repel it, or explain, as I repeatedly yielded to him the floor for either purpose. He was furnished with another opportunity, on the succeeding morning, when he arose to correct such parts of the reporter's account of my remarks as he deemed erroneous. *On neither of those occasions did he make any such effort.*"

Now, how could any man, who had any regard for his character, or ever presumed to intimate that he was a gentleman, have made *any such assertion*? When every person present in the House knows perfectly well with *what scorn* his remarks were repelled at the time? And next morning, when attention was called to language which he was represented in a report to have attributed to me, which I had never used, *he disavowed it*; but, notwithstanding that public disavowal, the same has since been substantially repeated in the speech which he has published.

The days have been, when, to be a gentleman, implied the possession of some of the nobler traits of character, amongst others, virtue, honor, *truth*, and *integrity*; but that member seems to have selected a model for the measurement of his own standard of "*gentlemanly*" conduct, distinguished rather for an *entire absence* than the *possession* of these qualities. It is not my province to assign him his "position," or place amongst men. That, indeed, would be as unnecessary as profitless a job for any one to undertake. His character has but to be exhibited, and left to itself, and, like many things in nature, it will soon sink to its own proper level.

The minds of some, however, may not be free from doubt,

whether his blunders and imperfections, and even *moral obliquities*, should not rather, in *pity*, be attributed to a natural weakness of intellect, stimulated by an overweening vanity, than to any great malignity of purpose. In either alternative, to characterize them at this time, as they otherwise would deserve, could not escape the censure of pursuing with vindictiveness a retreating and a harmless foe. Under such circumstances, I should be bound to restrain "my vengeance," "tardy," as it may be, if I felt any. There is a point in human degradation to which even contempt cannot descend, and at which the harsher feelings of resentment naturally yield to the gentler impulses of commiseration. But

"I come to *bury* Cæsar, not to praise him."

Yours, respectfully,

A. H. STEPHENS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *March 5, 1844.*

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